The Global Need for Earth Observations and Data Sharing

John Jones

NOAA's National Weather Service Deputy Director

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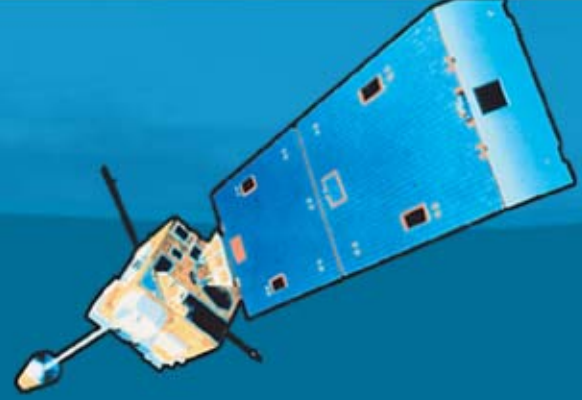
Overview



- Earth Observation Summit
- Earth Observation System
- Current policy on data sharing
- What we are doing
- Moving forward

Earth Observation Summit
July 31, 2003

The Summit was led by NOAA's Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr. This initiative is very important to NOAA and represented a high level governmental / political commitment to move toward a comprehensive, coordinated global network:

- **Issued declaration to support this concept**
- **Launched development of 10-year implementation plan**
- **Established the ad hoc intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) with four Co-Chairs (Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr. of NOAA represented the U.S.)**
- **Thirty-four (34) governments and 21 international organizations participated in the Summit**

Earth Observation Summit Results

- Established ad hoc Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to develop plan
- Affirmed need for timely, quality, long-term, global information as a basis for sound decision-making
- Recognized need to support:
  1) Comprehensive, coordinated, sustained Earth observation system or systems
  2) Coordinated efforts to address capacity-building needs related to Earth Observations
  3) Exchange of observations in a full and open manner with minimum time delay and minimum cost
  4) Preparation of a 10-year Implementation Plan that builds on existing systems and initiatives and sets the Tokyo ministerial in April or May 2004 and the 10-year plan for Brussels ministerial in late 2004
- Invited other governments to join

What is an Earth Observation System?

- **Purpose: Enhance global Earth observation capability through a coordinated, international program.**
- **Why needed: Global data sets are needed to predict large-scale phenomena such as monsoons.**
- **Aim: Develop an Earth Observation System concept that meets members' Earth observation requirements in a systematic and coordinated matter.**
- **Critical Properties:**
  - **International**
  - **Comprehensive**
  - **Sustainable**

Elements of an Earth Observation System

- Research and operational observation instruments and platforms
- In situ and remote sensing observation networks
- Communication links and computing capacity
- Application development centers
- Methodology to combine multiple-source data to facility decision-making and produce useful products for society

Benefits of an International Earth Observation Program

- **Respond to global requirements**
- **Identify and seek to fill gaps and avoid duplication**
- **Improvements, benefits from existing systems**
- **Facilitate decision-making**
- **NOAA is a leader among many Federal agencies**
- **Establish GEO International Working Groups**
  - *Architecture*
  - *Capacity Building*
  - *Data Utilization*
  - *International Cooperation*
  - *User Requirements & Outreach*

Current Policy: U.S. Public Information Policy

"Open and unrestricted access to public information at no more than the cost of dissemination"

"…government information is a valuable national resource, and… the economic benefits to society are maximized when government information is available in a timely and equitable manner to all."

From OMB Circular No. A-130

Current Policy: U.S. Information Dissemination Principles

Federal agencies should:

- **Actively disseminate all public information;**
- **Without restrictions or conditions;**
- **At no more than the cost of dissemination;**
- **While taking advantage of private, academic and other channels of dissemination;**
- **And using best available technologies, e.g., Internet, WWW, satellite downcast, etc…**
- **GEO is working to establish international policy and standards (from OMB Circular No. A-130)**

Moving Forward

- Emerging recognition in Europe that open access to government information is critical to the information society, environmental protection, and economic growth.
- Recent trend to more “liberal” policies faces opposition from “government commercialization” initiatives.
- Open government information policies foster significant but not easily quantifiable economic benefits to society.
- Support full, open and unrestricted international access to scientific data for public interest purposes.

Moving Forward

- Support full, open, and unrestricted international access to scientific data for public interest purposes.
- Let the private sector lead in using public sector information to meet the diverse needs of citizens and users.
- Avoid the imposition of government copyrights, limit fees to recoup dissemination costs, and eliminate restrictions on reuse.

Moving Forward

- Avoid a monopoly on public sector information.
- Maintain a strong freedom of information law. This fosters greater transparency and public trust in government.